

Ex-spy says Soviet killed a defector

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WASHINGTON—Vitaly Yurchenko, a high-ranking Soviet spy who defected to the U.S. last summer, contends that a long-missing defector, former Soviet Navy Capt. Nicholas Shadrin, was killed by Soviet agents in Vienna a decade ago.

Thus, it appears that the final chapter in a Cold War spy thriller, which at one point involved a personal plea from President Gerald Ford to Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev to save Shadrin, may have been written.

Shadrin was a double agent for the U.S. at the time of his disappearance, Dec. 19, 1975. On that morning, he said goodbye to his wife, Ewa, and set out from their Vienna hotel room to meet with the Soviet KGB agents. Though working for the FBI and CIA, Shadrin's mission was to try to persuade the KGB that his heart still belonged to the Soviet Union.

Brezhnev later told Ford that Shadrin failed to show up for a second Vienna meeting with Soviet officials. Brezhnev said he assumed that the CIA had custody of Shadrin.

Case of bungling?

But the Daily News has learned that Yurchenko, in charge of Soviet espionage activities in North America, has told the FBI Shadrin was killed by the Russians almost immediately.

It could be a classic case of bungling by both the KGB and the CIA. The Soviets hardly had a chance to grill Shadrin, the normal procedure, and it may have been that a KGB agent pulled the

trigger too quickly fearing that Shadrin might escape.

But the CIA was supposed to be watching him. A CIA counterintelligence officer, Cynthia Hausmann, was in Vienna closely monitoring Shadrin but she decided, for some reason, that no surveillance was necessary.

As in most spy sagas, there may be still another side. The CIA and FBI may have sent Shadrin to his death to protect "Igor," a Soviet working for the U.S.

Igor was a controversial figure, implicitly trusted by the FBI but seen as a "phony defector" by some CIA officials.

In any event, FBI officials may have decided that if Shadrin failed to continue his activities with the KGB, Igor's standing with the Soviets might fall, too. The current whereabouts of Igor—or even if he is still alive—could not be learned.

By all accounts, though, Shadrin was a major intelligence find for the U.S. When he defected in 1959, he was the youngest destroyer captain in the Soviet Navy. He escaped from Gdansk, Poland, in a small boat with his lover, who later became his wife and is now a Virginia dentist.